

Gorbachev's Line on Lithuania Grows Stricter but Less Specific

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MOSCOW, April 9 — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev and his new presidential council decided today to take unspecified "additional economic, political and other measures" against Lithuania after rejecting the rebel republic's latest attempt to explain its declaration of independence.

The 16-member council, with Mr. Gorbachev in the chair, decided that the Lithuanian reply to his March 31 appeal to repeal the declaration "was not constructive and did not open an avenue toward settling problems," the official press agency, Tass, reported.

Tass said the council considered the reply by the Lithuanian President, Vytautas Landsbergis, "a dead end."

The Stirrings in Georgia

"Members of the presidential council concluded that additional economic, political and other measures should be taken to protect the Soviet Constitution and the interests of citizens living in the republic and the Soviet Union as a whole," Tass reported in a four-paragraph account of the session that gave no hint of what Moscow might do next.

With the Lithuanian standoff hardening, people in Georgia, the southern Soviet republic, marched and gathered to commemorate the killings of 19 peaceful pro-independence demonstrators at a rally in the republic's capital Tbilisi, on April 9, 1989. [Page A8.]

A spokeswoman for the Lithuanian government in Vilnius, the Baltic state's capital, said late tonight that

there was no sign of new action by Soviet troops, who have occupied printing presses, the Chief Prosecutor's Office and the Communist Party headquarters there since the republic's declaration of independence on March 11.

After learning of the decision by the Moscow council, she said, Mr. Landsbergis told reporters that Lithuanians should give no provocation and that their best means of self-defense were publicity, world attention and the value that the Soviet Union places on relations with foreign countries that are concerned about the Lithuanian issue.

"Maybe the West will see now that

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Gorbachev Speaks of Additional Lithuanian Steps

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Gorbachev does not fit the image that he likes to put across," she quoted Mr. Landsbergis as saying. "Sooner or later, perhaps without cataclysm, this empire is collapsing. There's no guarantee that there won't be a cataclysm, but the process is under way."

That process is centered in the Baltics, but today about 60,000 people in Georgia, the Caucasus republic where Stalin was born, demonstrated in its capital, Tbilisi, in favor of secession. In January, Mr. Gorbachev sent troops into Azerbaijan, in Central Asia, after ethnic violence there. Foreign correspondents based in Moscow have been banned from traveling to Lithuania.

British Envoy in Moscow

President Bush and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, whose Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, arrived in Moscow tonight, have told Soviet leaders that the Lithuanian dispute must be settled through negotiation and compromise, not by force.

The Lithuanian spokeswoman denied a Tass report that Mr. Landsbergis had told the Lithuanian Parliament that international support for Lithuania had "visibly weakened" in the last week.

Mr. Gorbachev's 16-member presi-

dential council includes the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs, and the K.G.B. chief.

A group of 300 hard-line members of the Supreme Soviet, the standing Parliament in Moscow, also made a proposal today to dissolve the Lithuanian Parliament, call new elections and declare direct rule by Mr. Gorbachev in Lithuania, Tass reported.

The group, which was formed last fall to "preserve the unity of the U.S.S.R. within the framework of a renewed federation," said the Sajudis movement for Lithuanian independence, which Mr. Landsbergis heads, should be dissolved and prosecuted for violating the Soviet Constitution.

'Strong Leadership'

Mr. Landsbergis's reply to Mr. Gorbachev, on April 2, praised the Soviet President for "strong leadership" in encouraging political freedom, and said in conciliatory tones that Lithuania had never expected that its declaration of independence would lead to full and immediate sovereignty.

Last week, while the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard A. Shevardnadze, was in Washington, the tension seemed to ease. On Tuesday, a Lithuanian delegation met in Moscow with Mr. Gorbachev's chief Communist Party ally, Aleksandr N. Yakovlev, who is also a member of the presidential council.

And there are indications that Lithuania is prepared to consider holding a referendum on independence, as required by a newly passed Soviet law on secession. The law requires a two-thirds majority in favor of independence and prescribes a five-year transition period before it can be achieved.

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were annexed by the Soviets in 1940 as part of a secret protocol to a nonaggression pact between Hitler and Stalin. Lithuania calls the annexation void.

Estonia's Rumblings

Estonia's Parliament has asked Mr. Gorbachev to end his pressure on the Lithuanians, a move that the Soviet chief sharply criticized last week. On Saturday, Latvia's Communist Party split over the issue of whether it should support independence for that republic.

The decision by Mr. Gorbachev's council apparently increases the pressure on Lithuania's leaders to give up the claim of independence, recognize Soviet sovereignty and follow the new rules if they insist on independence.

Part of Moscow's concern focuses on the non-Lithuanian minority living in the republic. The Kremlin insists that the voters be polled before the republic asserts independence, to insure that the views of all Soviet citizens in Lithuania are voiced.